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ABSTRACT

This teaching unit represents a specific "dramatic moment" in history that can allow students to delve into the deeper meanings of selected landmark events and explore their wider context in the great historical narrative. Studying a crucial turning point in history helps students realize that history is an ongoing, open-ended process, and that the decisions they make today create the conditions of tomorrow's history. This unit is about the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance is part of the post-World War I cultural upheaval that found all of U.S. society trying to come to terms with the shift from a rural way of life to an urban and industrialized one. The unit can be taught after studying World War I or as a transition to the era of the Great Depression and the New Deal. The unit is based on primary sources taken from documents, artifacts, journals, diaries, newspapers, and literature from the period under study. Within the unit are teacher background materials that provide an overview of the entire unit and the historical information and context necessary to link the "dramatic moment" to the larger historical narrative. Lesson plans include a variety of ideas and approaches. An extensive bibliography contains 7 items about painting and sculpture, 13 poem citations, 12 articles and maps, and 7 recording dates. (BT)

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THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

A Unit of Study for Grades 9-12

by

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Teacher Associate, NCHS

L. Symcox

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UCLA

Linda Symcox, Project Director and Series Editor
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Front Cover: *Cover from the journal "The Crisis," June 1920.*

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For information on additional teaching units and other resources from the Center, please write:

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APPROACH AND RATIONALE

By Linda Symcox

The National Center for History in the Schools has developed the following collection of lessons for teaching The Harlem Renaissance. Our units are the fruit of a year-long collaboration between history professors and experienced teachers of both United States and World History. They represent specific "**dramatic moments**" in history from which you and your students can pause to delve into the deeper meanings of selected landmark events and explore their wider context in the great historical narrative.

In our approach, the continuing narrative provides the context in which the dramatic moment is situated. By studying a crucial turning point in history, the student becomes aware that choices had to be made by real human beings, that those decisions were the result of specific factors, and that they set in motion a series of historical consequences. We have selected dramatic moments that best bring alive that decision-making process. We hope that through this approach, your students will realize that history in an ongoing, open-ended process, and that the decisions they make today create the conditions of tomorrow's history.

Our dramatic moments are based on **primary sources**, taken from documents, artifacts, journals, diaries, newspapers and literature from the period under study. As you know, a primary source is a **first-hand** account of any event in history. For example, the telecast or the script of a speech would be a primary source. A secondary source is a second-hand account of an event. This would be, for

example, the newspaper account of the speech the next day or a newscaster's report about the speech. All historical accounts, such as textbooks, are by their very nature secondary sources. What we hope to achieve using primary source documents in these lessons is to remove the distance that students feel from historical events and to connect them more intimately with the past. In this way we hope to re-create for your students a sense of "being there," a sense of seeing history through the eyes of the very people who were making decisions. This will help your students develop historical empathy, to realize that history is not an impersonal process divorced from real people like themselves. At the same time, by analyzing primary sources, students will actually practice the historian's craft, discovering for themselves how to analyze evidence, establish a valid interpretation and construct a coherent narrative in which all the relevant factors play a part.

CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

Within this unit, you will find: 1) **Teacher Background Materials** and 2) **Lesson Plans with Student Resources**. This unit, as we have said above, focuses on certain key moments in time and should be used as a supplement to your customary course materials. We have chose to pitch the various lessons on different grade levels and they can usually be adapted to a slightly higher or lower level.

The **Teacher Background** section should provide you with a good overview of the entire unit and with the historical information and context necessary to link

the specific **Dramatic Moment** to the larger historical narrative. You may consult it for your own use, and you may choose to share it with students if they are of a sufficient grade level to understand the materials.

The **Lesson Plans** include a variety of ideas and approaches for the teacher which can be elaborated upon or cut as you see the need. These lesson plans contain student resources which accompany each lesson. These resources consist of primary source documents, any handouts or student background materials, and in many cases, a bibliography for the unit.

In our series of teaching units, each collection can be taught in several ways. You can teach all of the lessons offered on any given topic, or you can select and adapt the ones that best support your particular course needs. We have not attempted to be comprehensive or prescriptive in our offerings, but rather to give you an array of enticing possibilities for in-depth study, at varying grade levels. We hope that you will find the lesson plans exciting and stimulating for your classes. We also hope that your students will never again see history as a boring sweep of inevitable facts and meaningless dates, but rather as an endless treasure of real life stories and an exercise in analysis and reconstruction, rather than rote memorization.

I, Too,
by Langston Hughes
1926

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll sit at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed,—

I, too, am America.

I. Unit Rationale and Overview

In *The Crisis* in 1920, W.E.B. Du Bois called for "a renaissance of American Negro literature....[for] the strange, heartrending race tangle is rich beyond dream and only we can tell the tale and sing the song from the heart." [April, pgs. 298-9]. By 1925, the New York Herald Tribune proclaimed that a "Negro renaissance" was well under way [May 7]. Now known best as the Harlem Renaissance, it was an era of vigorous cultural growth that coalesced around a group of creative young writers, artists, musicians, and powerful social thinkers such as Du Bois and Alain Locke in Manhattan's Harlem around 1920. Critics and historians have struggled to understand the movement and its impact over the years: What were its historical roots? How great is its art? How widespread and enduring its legacy? Studying the Harlem Renaissance and its role in defining African American cultural identity in the rapidly changing world of the early twentieth century not only helps students grasp that era's complexity, but also helps them develop insights into attitudes that exist in our society today.

Using a variety of documents, plus cooperative and individual instructional activities that emphasize critical thinking, students will examine the attitudes and strategies of a people battling to take their rightful place in American society. Art, literature, music, and film are also used to illustrate key points.

II. Unit Context

The Harlem Renaissance is part of the post-World War I cultural upheaval that found all of American society trying to come to terms with the shift from a rural way of

life to an urban and industrialized one. This unit can be taught after studying World War I, as a case study of the kinds of cultural clashes that dominated the 1920s, or as a transition to the era of the Great Depression and the New Deal. In preparation for teaching the Harlem Renaissance, background on Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, the NAACP, the agricultural slowdown in the South, Jim Crow Laws, the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, and the 1919 race riots would be worthwhile.

III. Correlation with the National History Standards

"The Harlem Renaissance" provides teaching materials which address National Standards for United States History; Exploring the American Experience, Era 7, The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930.) Lessons specifically address Standard 3C, *"Demonstrate understanding of the development of mass culture and how it changed American society by explaining the emergence of distinctively American art and literature including the contributions of the Harlem Renaissance and the 'Lost Generation.'"*

Lessons within this unit likewise address the Historical Thinking Standards, (Chapter 2), by providing primary source materials which challenge students to analyze cause-and-effect relationships, to marshal evidence of antecedent circumstances, to consider multiple perspectives, and to draw upon visual data, literary, and musical sources. Students are also expected to draw evidence from historical maps.

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IV. Unit Objectives

- To identify social, economic, and political events that affected African Americans in the first decades of the twentieth century.
- To describe and analyze the artistic and cultural fluorescence of African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance.
- To discuss the historical impact of the Harlem Renaissance.

V. An Introduction to "The Harlem Renaissance"

The historical roots of the Harlem Renaissance are complex. In part, they lay in the vast migration of the African Americans to northern industrial centers that began early in the century and increased rapidly as World War I production needs and labor shortages boosted job opportunities. The magnet for the move north for African American artists and intellectuals was New York City, where powerful voices for racial pride such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Charles S. Johnson were concentrated. By the 1910s Harlem had become a dynamic community that provided continuity and support for culturally diverse people pouring in from the South and the Caribbean.

The Harlem Renaissance is also rooted in the disappointment that African Americans felt with the limited opportunities open to them as the United States struggled to transform itself from a rural to an urban society. Increased contact between African Americans and white Americans in the workplace and on city streets forced a new awareness of the disparity between the

promise of U.S. democracy and its reality. African American soldiers who served in World War I were angered by the prejudice they often encountered back at home, compared to the greater acceptance they had found in Europe. A larger, better-educated urban population fully comprehended the limitations that white-dominated society had placed on them. As African Americans became increasingly disillusioned about achieving the justice that war-time rhetoric had seemed to promise, many determined to pursue their goals of equality and success more aggressively than before.

Organized political and economic movements also helped to energize the Harlem Renaissance by creating a new sense of empowerment in African Americans. The NAACP boasted nearly 44,000 members by the end of 1918. In the early 1920s Marcus Garvey's message of racial pride drew hundreds of thousands of ordinary men and women to this United Negro Improvement Association and its "Back-to-Africa" movement. Other African Americans, including many intellectuals, turned to socialism or communism for solutions. By 1920, large numbers of African Americans from various political and economic points of view were plainly unwilling to settle for the old ways any longer. One unexpected development had an impact on the form their demand for change would take: urban whites suddenly "took up" New York's African American community, bestowing patronage on young artists, opening up publishing opportunities, and pumping cash into Harlem's "exotic" night life in a complex relationship that scholars continue to probe. Fueled by all of these historical forces, an unprecedented outpouring of writing, music and visual arts began among African American artists.

The artistic output of the Harlem Renaissance was dominated by two ideologies, both driven by racial consciousness and pride. The first view is represented by people such as : W.E.B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson of the NAACP; Howard University philosophy professor Alain Locke; sociologist Charles Spurgeon and others who extolled the arts as an area where talented and culturally privileged African Americans could lead their race's fight for equality. They believed that works of art inspired by the artists' racial heritage and experience would prove the beauty of their race and its crucial contribution to American culture. Artistic successes, they believed, could be counted on to foster pride among all African Americans and prove their educated class to be equal of the white educated class. In "Criteria for Negro Art," Du Bois argued:

> We have a right, in our effort to get just treatment, to insist that we produce something of the best in human character and it is unfair to judge us by our criminals and prostitutes. This is justifiable propaganda. [*The Crisis*, 21 (June 19231), 55-6]

Du Bois hailed the "Talented Tenth" and Locke the "New Negro" as thinking persons whose race had survived war, migration, and prejudice, and had the strength and vision to lead the way to social justice.

Opposition to this "art-as-propaganda" view came from the very same elite vanguard of artists that the older generation was counting on to promote the cause: artists such as Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Aaron Douglas. They took a stand voiced in Wallace Thurman's short-lived journal, *Fire!!* , claiming the need to present the ordinary African American person objectively as individuals simply living in the flesh-and-blood world.

They argued against painting and characterizing only "cultured" and "high-class" African Americans who mirrored the standards of white society. In doing so, they spoke for young artists who chose to pursue their art for its own sake. If there was no better feud between these two ideological camps, it was in no small part due to the fact that the young artists still inevitably spoke from their unique experience as African American men and women.

As a discrete historical moment in American history the Harlem Renaissance came to an end sometime in the 1930s (most authorities place it in the early thirties.) The Great Depression sapped the money and energy of white patrons and party-goers as well as that of the citizens of Harlem, including the substantial support of journals such as the National Urban League's *Opportunity* and the NAACP's *The Crisis*. Harlem artists drifted to other opportunities in Washington, Paris, or Fish University in Nashville, with a sense of leaving behind not a defined movement as much as a social phenomenon.

How, then, should we finally evaluate the Harlem Renaissance? From an aesthetic point of view one of the main reproaches has been that little significant artistic criticism was written during the Renaissance. Some critics argue that much of the work produced during the Renaissance was not of an outstanding quality and that the period inevitably has been idealized, but others stress that the real point is the important breakthroughs made in two areas: technical mastery and ideological content. Another criticism--that the Harlem Renaissance was an elitist intellectual movement that barely touched the masses--should be put into perspective, according to authority Nathan Huggins:

[the idea that] despite a history that had divided them, art and culture would re-form the brotherhood into a common humanity...was an attitude of cultural elitism. But it is wrong to assume that these black intellectuals, because of it, were not related to the black common man in Harlem. I think...most Negroes were apt to agree that it [the artistic output] was a good thing....And such an achievement, because it was elite in character, was a source of race pride and an argument against continued discrimination. [*Harlem Renaissance*, 5-6].

Other authorities point to progress in relations between African and white Americans. During the Harlem Renaissance it was acceptable for the first time for Americans of both races--as equals--to make and exploit social contact. Also, the movement articulated some priorities for the achievement of racial equality that have been played out in the modern Civil Rights Movement.

Historical evidence certainly does not show unbroken progress in African American artistic (or political or economic) development since the period of the Harlem Renaissance. But history does support the view that the Renaissance was a liberating step in the search by African Americans for artistic and cultural identify on their own terms. Victor A. Kramer, in his 1987 collection of essays on the subject, makes an important point about the need for continuing historical and social evaluation of the Harlem Renaissance: "At this stage, questions about such a complicated movement may be even more valuable than answers." [*The Harlem Renaissance Re-Examined*, p. 2]

VI. LESSON PLANS

1. Evolution of Harlem
2. Art of the Harlem Renaissance
3. Historical Impact of the Harlem Renaissance

A. Student Objectives

- To describe the "Great Migration" of the 1910s and 1920s
- To locate Harlem on a map of New York City and trace the migration of blacks through Manhattan to Harlem
- To analyze the unrest felt by a growing number of urban blacks after World War I and the early years of the "Great Migration"
- To identify and evaluate several political and economic movements that had an impact on American blacks in the 1910s and 1920s

B. Lesson Activities

1. Engage students' interest in the Harlem Renaissance by reading **Document A**, the letter to *The Crisis* from "A Southern Colored Woman," describing her mixed feelings about a 1919 riot motivated by racial problems. To connect this historical event to students and their own difficult times, before reading the signature or explaining the circumstances of the letter, ask them who they think the writer could be, what sort of riot she is probably discussing, and when it might have taken place.

2. Give students a copy of the map "Percentage of blacks in total population of the United States by counties, 1910" [**Document B**]. Ask them to determine in which part of the country nearly all African Americans lived at that time (the South), then to use their own background knowledge to speculate about whether African Americans would be accustomed to an urban or a rural environment, what kind of jobs most of them would have, and what social conditions would be like for them. This is a good

place to discuss Jim Crow laws if students have not already studied them. With this foundation students are ready to study the "Great Migration" that began around the time of World War One.

3. Let students work in small groups to draw conclusions about the reasons that several million African Americans migrated to Northern cities by examining **Documents C through G**, all from the years 1915-1920. They should recognize such points as:

a) Many basic civil rights were denied African Americans in the South, and their lives were often endangered.

b) Wages in the South were low and working conditions poor.

c) Education possibilities in the South were limited for African Americans.

d) African Americans had more opportunity to achieve prominence in the North (i.e. De Priest, the owner of the Chicago Defender, was an African American, as was the man whose election to alderman is announced in the Chicago Defender headline.)

e) The job supply in Northern factories was expanding rapidly because of war production.

4. Give students "The Trek Northward," **Document H**, a map of Manhattan and most of new York City, then ask them to determine where and when African Americans lived there. They should be able to determine that there was a slow migration from their introduction into lower Manhattan in the

mid-nineteenth century, their progress northward to Greenwich Village, midtown, and the San Juan Hill area southwest of Central Park by the turn of the century, and the jump over the park to Harlem (first in 1905) in substantial numbers by 1910.

Continue to relate the lesson to today's world by asking students what they know about Harlem now and why they think African Americans developed this largely homogeneous community. Point out the advantages that such a cultural support system has while people get accustomed to a new way of life. The tight cultural community in Harlem was vital to the growth of the Harlem Renaissance.

5. Ask a student to read aloud "Save," a 1918 editorial in *The Crisis* [**Document I**]. Explain that *The Crisis* was published by the NAACP and discuss such questions as:

- What action does the NAACP advise African Americans to take?
- What reason does it give that is directly related to World War One?
- What reason is directly related to conditions for African Americans?
- How would you expect people to feel if they sacrificed to fight in World War One, but were not treated with respect afterwards?

Tell students they can find out the answer to whether the NAACP strategy worked by examining documents from the period after the war, [**Documents J, K, L.**] Point out two factors that might have influenced the way African Americans felt about their situation in the United States

at this time: 1) soldiers and nurses who had gone abroad during World War One returned home angry and frustrated that white strangers in Europe treated them with greater equality than did white Americans; 2) increasing numbers of young African Americans had become better educated and better informed since migrating to he North.

One thing that students might conclude is that more and more African Americans would probably be demanding changes by the 1920s and be willing to work to achieve them. Note the numbers of African Americans who supported Marcus Garvey, the UNIA, and the Back-to-Africa movement, and the flourishing of the NAACP, the National Urban League, and the Socialist Party. Then explain that the Harlem Renaissance, with its unprecedented outpouring of poetry, stories, novels, paintings, sculpture, music and dance was such a dramatic change fueled by ideas and innovations that had been suppressed or impossible in African American culture until now.

6. In class or for homework, ask students to identify and list the economic, political, or social events or conditions that eventually made possible the Harlem Renaissance. Then have them categorize the events/conditions according to whether they are reactions to conditions in the South, or direct actions taken by African Americans to improve their lives. Let students know that this assignment, as well as the culminating exercise for the activities of the next three days, will be directly applicable to the final project for the unit, an essay. Their work should look something like this:

Reactions to Conditions in the South

- lynchings and burnings in South
- better pay and working conditions in North
- better educational opportunities in North
- more jobs in North

Outcomes of Living in the North

- growth of organizations and movements that promoted interests of African Americans
- increased number of educated and informed African Americans
- awareness of white Americans treating African Americans worse than did many whites in other countries

Actions Taken by African Americans to Improve Their Lives

- Coalescence of demand for change among large numbers of African Americans

C. Lesson Evaluation

1. Check for understanding during discussions.

2. Assess group participation, especially the ability of students to analyze documents by considering who created them, who their intended audience was, what the historical context was, as well as the factual content of the document.

3. Evaluate written list and categorizations.

Letter to *The Crisis*

November 1919, XIX, 339

(Primary Source)

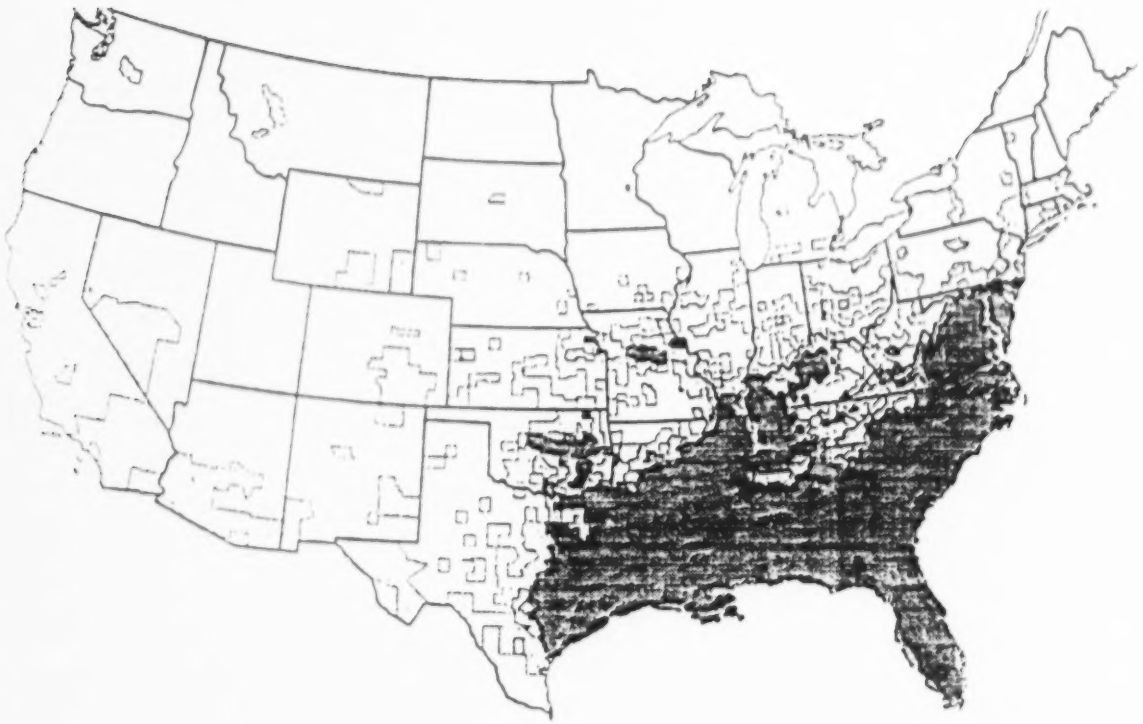
The Washington riot gave me a thrill that comes once in a lifetime. I was alone when I read between the lines of the morning paper that at last our men had stood like men, struck back, were no longer dumb, driven. When I could no longer read for my streaming tears, I stood up, alone in my room, held both hands high over my head and exclaimed aloud: "Oh, I thank God, thank God!"...

We know how many insults we have borne silently, for we have hidden many of them from our men because we did not want them to die needlessly in our defense; we know the sorrow of seeing our boys and girls grow up, the swift stab of the knife at night at the sound of a strange footstep....

God grant that our men everywhere refrain from strife, provoke no quarrel, but that they protect their women and homes at any cost.

A Southern Colored Woman

I'm sure the editor will understand why I cannot sign my name.



Percentage of blacks in total population of the United States by counties, 1910

Less than 1 percent
1 to 10 percent
10 to 50 percent and over

Map, Library of Congress.

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Newspaper Headline

Prisoners Given to Bloodthirsty Whites by Sheriff, Who Sees Them Lynched

TORCH LAW SANCTIONED

Lynching Statistics from *The Crisis*, 1920

The Crisis (1920)

According to THE CRISIS records, 77 Negroes were lynched during the year 1919, of whom 1 was a colored woman and 11 were soldiers. 4 white persons and 3 Mexicans also were lynched, a total of 83 lynchings.

During the year 1918, 61 Negroes were lynched, 5 of whom were colored women; 1 white man was lynched.

Georgia still leads, with an increase of 2 lynchings; Mississippi takes second place, instead of first, with 5 more lynchings; Alabama, by an increase of 5 lynchings, ties with Louisiana.

In methods of torture, lynchings have increased from 2 in 1918 to 11 in 1919.

January 18, Shreveport, La., Henry Thomas, murder.

January 20, Hillsboro, Tex., Bragg Williams, burned, murder.

January 29, Monroe, La., Simpson Smith, murder.

February 6, Newburn, N. C., John Daniels, murder.

February 14, Bossier, La., Will Fortner, murder.

March 2, Belzoni, Miss., Eugene Green; assault on man.

March 12, Greenville, Fla., Joe Walker; shooting.

March 13, Tuscaloosa, Ala., Cicero Cage, cut to pieces; pulling woman from horse.

March 14, Pensacola, Fla., Bud Johnson, soldier, burned; attempt to rape.

April —, Blakely, Ga., Wilbur Little, soldier, beaten; wearing U. S. A. uniform too long.

According to States

Georgia	22	Missouri	2
Mississippi	12	Colorado	2
Alabama	8	West Virginia	2
Louisiana	8	Nebraska	1
Arkansas	7	Washington	1
Texas	5	Tennessee	1
Florida	5	Kansas	1
North Carolina	4	Sonora (Mexico)	1
South Carolina	2		

By Race

Negro	77	Mexican	3
White	4		

By Sex

Male	83	Female	1

Alleged Crimes

Murder	28	Shooting and assault to murder	7
Rape and attempted rape	19		
Trivial causes	9	Insulting women	7
Intimacy with women	4	Labor trouble	1
Bandits	3	Quarrel	1
Unknown	2	Insurrection	1
Burglary	2		

Methods of Torture

Hanging	43	Drowning	2
Shooting	23	Beating	1
Burning	14	Cutting	1

Negroes Lynched By Years, 1885–1919

1885	78	1903	86
1886	71	1904	83
1887	80	1905	61
1888	95	1906	64
1889	95	1907	60
1890	90	1908	93
1891	121	1909	73
1892	155	1910	65
1893	154	1911	63
1894	134	1912	63
1895	112	1913	79
1896	80	1914	69
1897	122	1915	80
1898	102	1916	55
1899	84	1917	44
1900	107	1918	61
1901	107	1919	77
1902	86		
		Total	3,052

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Granville, Mississippi, May 16, 1917

Dear Sir: This letter is a letter of information of which you will find stamp envelop for reply. I want to come north some time soon but I do not want to leve here looking for a job where I would be in dorse all winter. Now the work I am doing here is running a guage edger in a saw mill. I know all about the grading of lumber. I have been working in lumber about 25 or 27 years. My wedges here is $3.00 a day 11 hours a day. I want to come North where I can educate my 3 little children also my wife. Now if you cannot fit me up at what I am doing down here I can learn anything any one els can. also there is a great deal of good women cooks here would leave any time all they want is to know where to go and some way to go. please write me at once just how I can get my people where they can get something for their work. There are women here cookeing for $1.50 and $2.00 a week. I would like to live in Chicago or Ohio or Philadelphia. Tell Mr. Abbott that our pepel are tole that they can not get anything to do up there and they are being snatched off the trains here in Greenville and a rested but in spite of all this, they are leaving every day and every night 100 or more is expecting to leave this week. Let me here from you at once.

Emmett J. Scott, "Letters of Negro Migrants of 1916-1918," *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 4 (July, 1919), p. 435, published by the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Inc. .'

[The "Mr. Abbott" referred to is the Negro owner of the Chicago Defender *who encouraged the migration.]*

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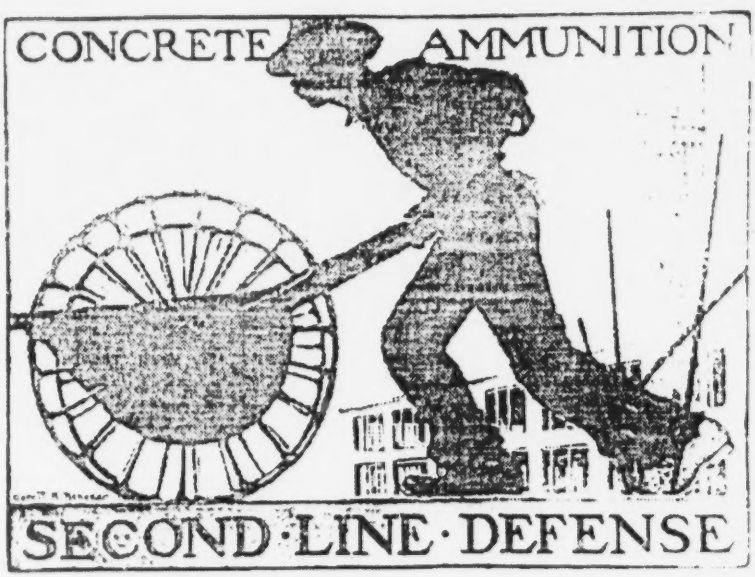

Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration, 1915-1940,
Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institute, 1987.

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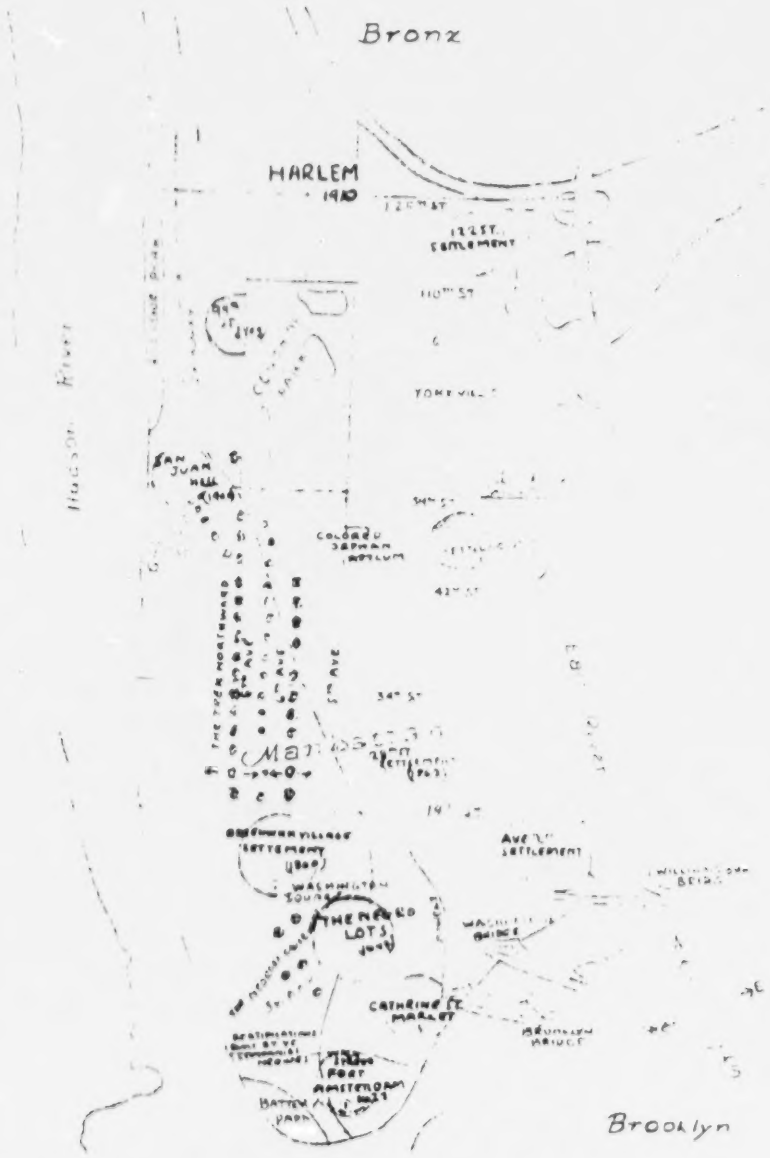

THE TREK NORTHWARD
Movement of the Negro population in N.Y.C.
by Everett Beunie, Fed. Inv. Rs., 5-11-39

The Negro in New York : An informal Social History,
New York: New York Public Library, 1967

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THE CRISIS

Vol. 16—No. 1 MAY, 1918 Whole No. 91

Editorial

SAVE

I BELIEVE that this is Our War and not President Wilson's War and that no matter how many blunders the administration makes, or how many obstacles it puts in our way we must work the harder to win the war.

I want to urge the importance of advertising in every way you can the campaign for War Savings—savings of money, of food, of labor. In doing so you kill three birds with one stone:

1. Promote the success of the war.
2. Increase the individual wealth of your constituency.
3. Put them on a common footing with other patriotic American citizens and promote those common bonds that gradually break down prejudice.

If the colored citizens of the country seize this opportunity to emphasize their American citizenship by effective war activities, they will score tremendously. When men fight together and work together and save together, this foolishness of race prejudice disappears.

GEORGE G. BRADFORD.

THE NEGRO AND THE WAR DEPARTMENT.

IT seems to be necessary to insist upon justice toward the Negro from the War Department. We are well aware that much of this injustice is incidental and not intentional. As Negroes, we propose to fight for the right, no matter what our treatment may be; but we submit to the public that intentional injustice toward colored soldiers is the poorest investment that this nation can make just now.

First, let us recall the position of Colonel Young: he is still imprisoned in Ohio on full pay with nothing to do. The Examining Board recommended that Colonel Young be "retained in *active service*." The Secretary of War approved this recommendation and directed that "Colonel Young be placed on *active duty*." The Adjutant General, knowing the difference between "active service" and "active duty" immediately retired Colonel Young from active *service* and placed him on active *duty* with nothing to do.

Twelve million Negroes demand that Colonel Young be restored to "active service!"

Again, the Ninety-second Division of Negro troops was established by the Secretary of War and approved by President Wilson over the protest of the General Staff: but no effort was made to secure for this division certain necessary persons of technical training. The colored officers at Fort Des Moines were given no artillery training. Farmers from the South, largely illiterate and without mechanical skill or education, were assigned to the artillery in the first draft. This, however, could easily have been remedied by transferring from other regiments in this division and from other divisions, educated and technically trained colored men. *The permission to make such trans-*

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THE SHAME OF AMERICA

Do you know that the United States is the Only Land on Earth where human beings are BURNED AT THE STAKE?

In Four Years 1918-1921, Twenty-Eight People were publicly BURNED BY AMERICAN MOBS

3436 People Lynched, 1889-1921

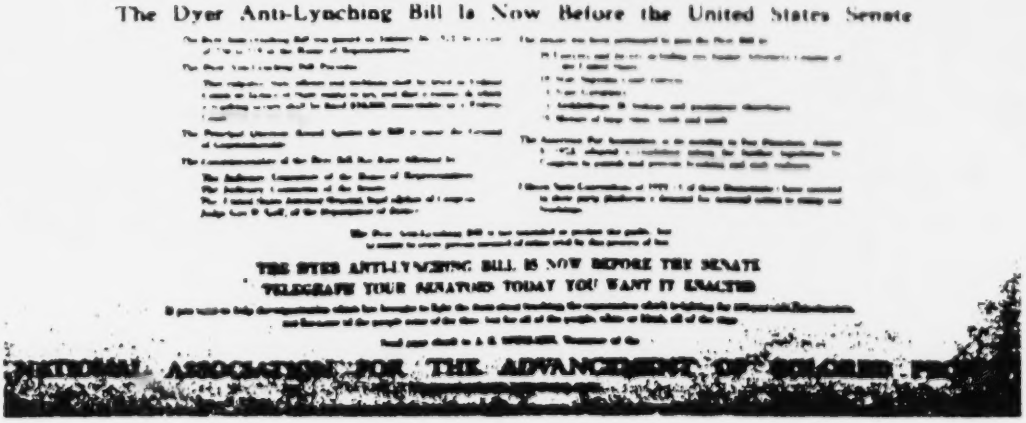
Is Rape the "Cause" of Lynching?

83 WOMEN HAVE BEEN LYNCHED IN THE UNITED STATES

AND THE LYNCHERS GO UNPUNISHED

THE REMEDY

The Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill Is Now Before the United States Senate



New York Times, November 23,1922

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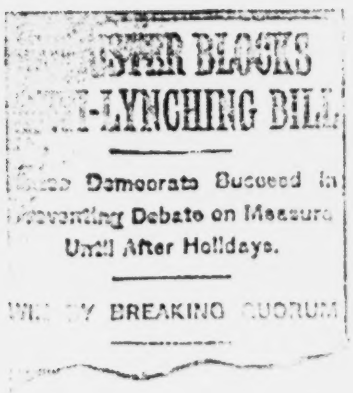
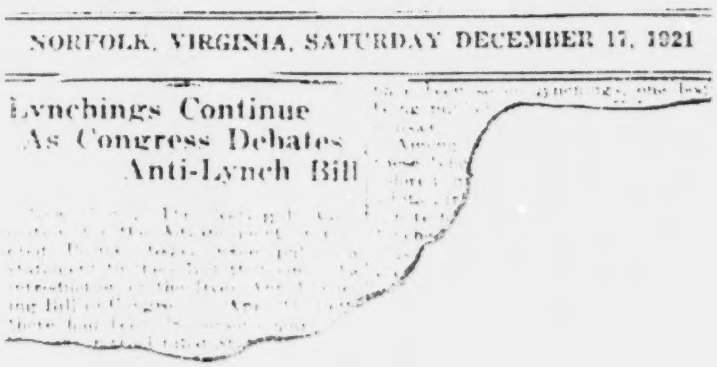


...STER BLOCKS
...-LYNCHING BILL

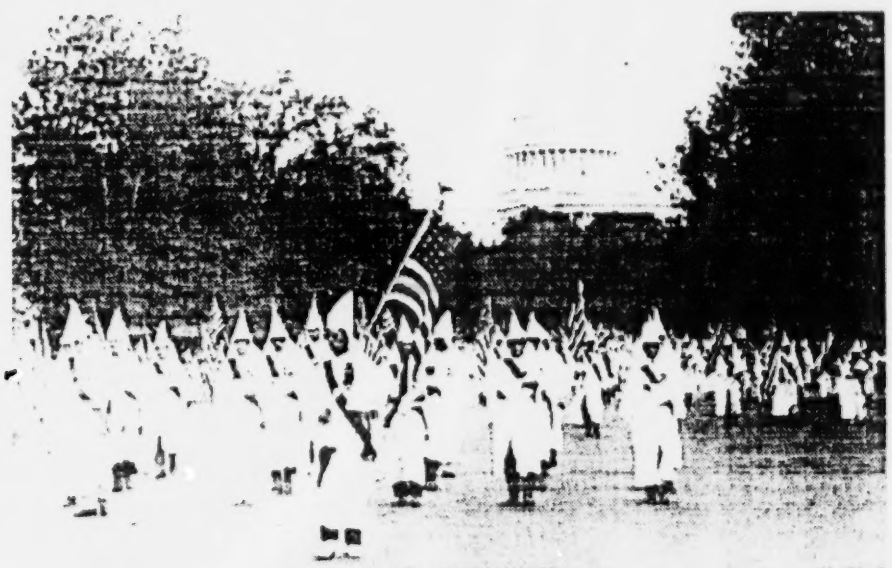
...Democrats Succeed in ...
...venting Debate on Measure ...
Until After Holidays.

WILL BY BREAKING QUORUM



NORFOLK, VIRGINIA, SATURDAY DECEMBER 17, 1921

Lynchings Continue
As Congress Debates
Anti-Lynch Bill



The Ku Klux Klan paraded in full regalia in 1925 down Pennsylvania Avenue past the White House and Congress.

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TWO-AND-A-HALF DAYS

A. Student Objectives

- To examine literature, visual arts, and music produced by African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance
- To identify major themes in the art of the Harlem Renaissance
- To recognize the extra burden that being members of a minority race in the United States placed on African Americans while they tried to cope with the nation's shift from a rural to an urban society

B. Lesson Activities - First Day

1. Provide students with examples of poetry from the Harlem Renaissance (**Documents M.1-M.13**) which reveal three main themes that recur throughout the artistic works created during this era. The first three poems, which are followed by questions that will help students figure out the point of each, can be used to model. Let students work in small groups to read the remaining poems and briefly describe their point (for example, protesting the lynching of African Americans.)

2. When finished, bring students together as a whole group and list their points about the poetry on the blackboard, categorize the poem into three groups corresponding to three major themes:

- Harlem life and culture
- Establishment of identity as African Americans
- Feelings of anger and frustration about white America

3. In class or for homework, have students do a "Quick-Write" in which they state:

   1) What the Harlem Renaissance is and when it occurred;

   2) The three main themes found in the writing and other artistic work of the period;

   3) An example of each theme occurring in poetry, naming a poet, and the poem in which it occurs.

   (N.B. Themes can be generated by students if you choose.)

C. **Lesson Evaluation**

1. Check for understanding during discussion.

2. Assess group participation, especially making sure that students understand each poem and can generate a succinct description of it.

3. Evaluate Quick-Writes.

D. **Lesson Activities - Second Day**

1. Show students examples of paintings, sculptures, and other works created by Harlem Renaissance artists (**Please refer to bibliography on page 48**)

2. Play samples of Harlem Renaissance music in chronological order to how it developed over time. The compositions represent some of the

greatest musicians and singers of the period and document the progress from ragtime to blues to jazz. Most of the works represent Harlem life. Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" is a classic treatment of the theme of anger. The following discussion, "Music in the Harlem Renaissance," covers some of the main points.

Music in the Harlem Renaissance

In *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance*, Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., tries to put spirituals, blues, and jazz into perspective, quoting from Nathan Huggins' interview with musician Eubie Blake:

N.H. You are saying that white people were coming uptown following the music. And it was the sense of the music that was at the center of the Renaissance?

E.B. The music and the entertainment.
[*Huggins, Nathan (ed.), Voices from the Harlem Renaissance, New York: Oxford University Press*, 339-40]

Floyd's main point is that the Harlem Renaissance is seen mainly as a literary movement, but, in fact, no aspect of it was more important than the music: "In the New Negro's attempt to define and build a culture, music provided much of the movement's color, spirit, and quality.... This is not surprising since music had always been a critical part of the existence of all individual Afro-Americans while literature had not."

The reason for music's lack of recognition, Floyd argues, is that, while spirituals had wide respect as a traditional folk genre, blues and jazz were scorned by African American leaders (and much of their middle and upper economic classes) as representing a stereotyped African American culture. Leonard Neil, in *Jazz and the White Americans* contends that the tribal roots and supposed "primitivism" in blues and jazz were precisely what attracted cosmopolitan whites to the music. Struggling to break free of newly-discovered Freudian constraints, whites were drawn to music (and dance) created by presumably unspoiled, uninhibited African American artists. Leaders such as Du Bois who wanted to prove that African Americans could produce music in the European mold, cringed at any acceptance of blues and jazz. Floyd pursues these contradictions:

Apparently, Renaissance leaders did not understand, or would not acknowledge, the fact that all of the black musical genres belonged to a single cultural and aesthetic tradition, that they were all bound together by a common body of musico-aesthetic principles and characteristics. By 1920 it was certainly clear that polymeter, multimeter, call-and-response patterns, certain pitch collections and inflections, and all of the sound devices and techniques of Afro-American music performance practices were common traits, to some degree, of all the music that had emanated from black

culture in the United States, and that these traits defined this body of music as Afro-American. Being of the culture, this music mirrored and expressed Afro-American life-styles—the struggles and the fulfillments of living in a land and an environment that was both hostile and promising, binding and free. Apparently, however, the elements that defined the music of the black folk communicated the very stereotypes and values that Renaissance leaders wanted to eradicate.

In spite of such contradictions, Renaissance thinkers believed that the building of a culture required a foundation. . . For this foundation, black thinkers and artists reached back to the artistic forms of the "old Negro" and his forbears in Africa. This approach was reasonable and appropriate. . . .

3. In class or for homework, have students pick two or three works of art and two or three pieces of music that affect them the most. Have them name the works and the creators/performers, then explain why they chose those pieces.

Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance, New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.

E. Lesson Evaluation

1. Check for understanding during discussion.

2. Evaluate writing assignment

DIRECTIONS: Read each poem, then decide which Harlem Renaissance theme or themes it represents.

The Negro Speaks of Rivers, *by Langston Hughes*
1926

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Questions:

1. What is the mood of this poem?

2. Does the poem suggest weakness or strength in the person? How does it suggest this person will deal with his or her life—as a winner or a loser?

3. What is the overall theme of this poem?

Jazzonia, *by Langston Hughes*
1926

Oh, silver tree!
Oh, shining rivers of the soul!

In a Harlem cabaret
Six long-headed jazzers play.
A dancing girl whose eyes are bold
Lifts high a dress of silken gold.

Oh, singing tree!
Oh, shining rivers of the soul!

Were Eve's eyes
In the first garden
Just a bit too bold?
Was Cleopatra gorgeous
In a gown of gold?

Oh, shining tree!
Oh, silver rivers of the soul!

In a whirling cabaret
Six long-headed jazzers play.

Questions:

1. What is the setting of this poem? What are people doing?

2. Does Hughes approve of the "dancing girl" described in the second stanza? What is your evidence?

3. Which lines show that cabarets, jazz, and dancing were vital to the life of the people of Harlem?

4. What is the overall theme of this poem?

Dream Variation, *by Langston Hughes*

To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun.
To whirl and to dance
Till the white day is done.
Then rest at cool evening
Beneath a tall tree
While night comes on gently,
  Dark like me—
That is my dream!

To fling my arms wide
In the face of the sun,
Dance! whirl! whirl!
Till the quick day is done
Rest a pale evening. . . .
A tall, slim tree. . . .
Night coming tenderly
  Black like me.

Questions:

1. With what does the poet identify himself?

2. To what does the poem compare whites? What does this suggest about the place of whites in the poet's world?

3. What is the poet's attitude toward whites—is it simply negative or is there evidence of aggressiveness? Which lines show this?

4. What is the overall theme of this poem?

She of the Dancing Feet Sings, *by Countee Cullen*
1925

And what would I do in heaven, pray,
Me with my dancing feet,
And limbs like apple boughs that sway
When the gusty rain winds beat?

And how would I thrive in a perfect place
With not a man to love my face,
Where dancing would be sin,
Nor an arm to hold me in?

The seraphs and the cherubim
Would be too proud to bend
To sing the faery tunes that brim
My heart from end to end.

The wistful angels down in hell
Will smile to see my face,
And understand, because they fell
From that all-perfect place.

The Lynching, *by Claude McKay*
1953

His spirit in smoke ascended to high heaven.
His father, by the cruelest way of pain,
Had bidden him to his bosom once again;
The awful sin remained still unforgiven.
All night a bright and solitary star
(Perchance the one that ever guided him,
Yet gave him up at last to Fate's wild whim)
Hung pitifully o'er the swinging char.
Day dawned, and soon the mixed crowds came to view
The ghastly body swaying in the sun.
The women thronged to look, but never a one
Showed sorrow in her eyes of steely blue.

And little lads, lynchers that were to be,
Danced round the dreadful thing in fiendish glee.

My Race, *by Helene Johnson*
1925

Ah, my race,
Hungry race,
Throbbing and young—
Ah, my race,
Wonder race,
Sobbing with song—
Ah, my race,
Laughing race,
Careless in mirth—
Ah, my veiled
Unformed race,
Fumbling in birth.

I, Too, *by Langston Hughes*
1926

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll sit at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed,—

I, too, am America.

Lenox Avenue: Midnight, *by Langston Hughes*
1926

The rhythm of life
Is a jazz rhythm,
Honey.
The gods are laughing at us.

The broken heart of love,
The weary, weary heart of pain,—
  Overtones,
  Undertones,
To the rumble of street cars,
To the swish of rain.

Lenox Avenue,
Honey,
Midnight,
And the gods are laughing at us.

The Lynching, *by Dorothea Mathews*
1953

He saw the rope, the moving mob,
And suddenly thought of quiet things;
The way the river-ripples sob,
The silver flight of pigeon's wings
Free in the blue September air;
And that the night was warm and brown—
Under the trees the shadows hung;
The little stars of God looked down.

Harlem Night Song, *by Langston Hughes*

Come,
Let us roam the night together
Singing.

I love you.

Across
The Harlem roof-tops
Moon is shining.
Night sky is blue.
Stars are great drops
Of golden dew.
In the cabaret
The jazz-band's playing.

I love you.

Come,
Let us roam the night together
Singing.

The White Ones, *by Langston Hughes*

I do not hate you,
For your faces are beautiful, too.
I do not hate you,
Your faces are whirling lights of loveliness and splendor, too.
Yet why do you torture me,
O, white strong ones,
Why do you torture me?

From the Dark Tower, *by Countee Cullen*

We shall not always plant while others reap
The golden increment of bursting fruit,
Not always countenance, abject and mute,
That lesser men would hold their brothers cheap;
Not everlastingly while others sleep
Shall we beguile their limbs with mellow flute,
Not always bend to some more subtle brute'
We were not made eternally to weep.

The night whose sable breast relieves the stark,
White stars is no less lovely being dark,
And there are buds that cannot bloom at all
In light, but crumple, piteous, and fall;
So in the dark we hide the heart that bleeds,
And wait, and tend our agonizing seeds.

Heritage, *by Countee Cullen*

What is Africa to me:
Copper sun or scarlet sea,
Jungle star or jungle track,
Strong bronzed men, or regal black
Women from whose loins I sprang
When the birds of Eden sang?
One three centuries removed
From the scenes his fathers loved,
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,
What is Africa to me?

. . .

So I lie, who find no peace
Night or day, no slight release
From the unremittant beat
Made by cruel padded feet
Walking through my body's street.
Up and down they go, and back,
Treading out a jungle track.
So I lie, who never quite
Safely sleep from rain at night—
I can never rest at all
When the rain begins to fall'
Like a soul gone mad with pain
I must match its weird refrain'
Ever must I twist and squirm,
Writing like a baited worm,
While its primal measure drip
Through my body, crying, "Strip!
Doff this new exuberance.
Come and dance the Lover's Dance!"
In an old remembered way
Rain works on me night and day.

All day long and all night through,
One thing only must I do:
Quench my pride and cool my blood,
Lest I perish in the flood.
Lest a hidden ember set
Timber that I though was wet
Burning like the driest flax.
Melting like the merest wax,
Lest the grave restore its dead.
Hot yet has my heart or head
In the least way realized
They and I are civilized.

A. Student Objectives

- To relate the major themes in the art of the Harlem Renaissance to social, economic, and political problems that faced African Americans of the period

- To formulate a picture of life in Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance

- To assess the impact of the Harlem Renaissance with respect to artistic achievement and political, economic, and social achievement

B. Lesson Activities

1. Place students in balanced groups of 4 - 6 and instruct them to complete the "Harlem Renaissance Chart."(**See Student Worksheet II.**) This will require them to review and synthesize the material they have learned.

2. Lead a group discussion of student responses to the chart. In answering question three make sure students see that progress can occur even if all problems are not completely solved.

3. Give students the essay question, (**Student Worksheet III**), either to prepare at home to write in class the next day, or to write for homework.

C. Lesson Evaluation

1. Assess group participation

2. Check for understanding during discussion of the essay question

3. Evaluate essay

HARLEM RENAISSANCE CHART

1. Which problems (social, economic, or political) that African Americans faced during the early twentieth century are illustrated by each of the 3 major themes we have seen in the works of Harlem Renaissance artists?

Theme	Problems Faced by African Americans
•	
•	
•	

2. What picture do you get of life in Harlem during this period? Describe it.

3. What impact do you think the Harlem Renaissance has had on the United States? To answer the question, consider points such as these:

   1) the effect that achievement has on people;
   2) the value of assertive behavior, or problems associated with it;
   3) the contributions that diverse peoples can make to a society;
   4) political/economic/social pressure.

ESSAY: THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

The period of the 1920s through the early 1930s is known for the achievements made by African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance. What were the causes of the "Great Migration" of African Americans from the rural South to northern industrial cities such as New York around this time? Which historical events led to more assertive behavior and demands for change among African Americans during this period? How did African American artists show this assertive behavior in their work? In conclusion, what impact do you think the Harlem Renaissance has had on the United States?

A. Letter to *The Crisis*, November 1919, XIX, 339.
B. Map of "Percentage of blacks in total population of the United States by counties, 1910"
C. Newspaper headline describing "Prisoners Given. . .," 1917
D. Article from *The Crisis* on lynchings and burnings, 1920
E. Letter from Mississippi worker, 1917
F. Photo of sign to recruit African Americans from the South for Hog Island Ship-yard, 1917
G. Poster to recruit African Americans for war industry in North, 1917
H. Map of "The Trek Northward," the New York City area showing migration of significant African American population into Harlem by 1910
I. Editorial, "Save," from The Crisis, May, 1918
J. Poster, "The Shame of America" from the NAACP, 1921
K. Newspaper article, "Filibuster Blocks Anti-Lynching Bill," 1917
L. Photograph of Ku Klux Klan parade, 1925
M.1. "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," by Langston Hughes
M.2. "Jazzonia," by Langston Hughes
M.3. "Dream Variation," by Langston Hughes
M.4. "She of the Dancing Feet Sings," by Countee Cullen
M.5. "The Lynching," by Claude McKay
M.6. "My Race," by Helene Johnson
M.7. "I, Too," by Langston Hughes
M.8. "Lennox Avenue: Midnight," by Langston Hughes
M.9. "The Lynching," by Dorothea Matthews
M.10. "Harlem Night Song," by Langston Hughes
M.11. "The White Ones," by Langston Hughes
M.12. "From the Dark Tower," by Countee Cullen
M.13. "Heritage," (excerpt) by Countee Cullen

Paintings and Sculpture

Sahdji, by Aaron Douglas, in Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro: A n Interpretation*, NY: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1968, reprinted from a copy in the Arthur A. Schomburg Negro Collection, The New York Public Library.

Midsummer Night in Harlem, by Palmer Hayden, in Driskell, David C., *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Alfred A. Knopf, 1976.

Forever Free, by Sargent Claude Johnson, in Driskell, David C., *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, New York: Los Angles County Museum of Art/Alfred A. Knopf, 1976.

Fetiche et Fleurs, by Palmer Hayden, in Lewis, Samella, *Art: African American*, Los Angeles: Hancraft Studios, 1978, 1990.

Picnic, by Archibald Motley, Jr., in *Since the Harlem Renaissance: 50 Years of Afro-American Art,* catalog of exhibition organized by The Center Gallery of Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA: The Center Gallery of Bucknell University, 1985.

Lift Every Voice and Sing, by Augusta Savage, in Lewis, Samella, *Art: African American*, Los Angeles: Hancraft Studios, 1978, 1990.

Aspiration, by Aaron Douglas, in McElroy, Guy C., *African-American Artists 1880-1987: Selections from the Evans-Tibbs Collection,* Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution in association with University of Washington Press, 1989.

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"The Negro Speaks of Rivers," by Langston Hughes, in *The Weary Blues*, New York: Knopf, 1926.

"Jazzonia," by Langston Hughes, in *The Weary Blues*, New York: Knopf, 1926.

"Dream Variation," by Langston Hughes, in *The Weary Blues*, New York: Knopf, 1926.

"I, Too," by Langston Hughes, in *The Weary Blues*, New York: Knopf, 1926.

"Lennox Avenue: Midnight," by Langston Hughes, in *The Weary Blues*, New York: Knopf, 1926.

"Harlem Night Song," by Langston Hughes, in *The Weary Blues*, New York: Knopf, 1926.

"The White Ones," by Langston Hughes, in *The Weary Blues*, New York: Knopf, 1926.

"She of the Dancing Feet Sings," by Countee Cullen, in *Color*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1925.

"Heritage," by Countee Cullen, in *Color*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1925.

"From the Dark Tower," by Countee Cullen, in *Copper Sun*, New York: Harper & Bros., 1927.

"The Lynching," by Claude McKay, in *Selected Poems of Claude McKay*, New York: Bookman Associates, 1953.

"My Race," by Helene Johnson, in *Opportunity*, New York: National Urban League, July 1925.

"The Lynching," by Dorothea Matthews, in *Opportunity*, New York: National Urban League, April 1928.

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"Percentage of blacks in total population of the United States by counties, 1910," map, Library of Congress.

"Prisoners Given. . . ," headline

"According to the . . . ," *The Crisis*, 1920.

Letter from Granville, Mississippi worker, Scott, Emmett J., "Letters of Negro Migrants of 1916-1918," *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 4, July 1919, published by the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Inc.

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"Wanted 8000 Laborers. . . ," photograph, Crew, Spencer R., *Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration 1915-1940*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1987.

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"The Shame of America," poster, from the NAACP, in *New York Times*, Nov. 23, 1922.

"Filibuster Blocks Anti-Lynching Bill," headline, 1917

Ku Klux Klan parade, photograph, Culver Pictures, Inc.

Music

[Selections are from the Harlem Renaissance period; dates below are recording dates only.]

"Smashing Thirds," Fats Waller on piano [3:08], 1929, on *Classic Jazz Piano*, copyright 1988 BMG Music, New York, New York.

"Thou Swell," James P. Johnson on piano, with Jabbo Smith (cornet), Garvin Bushell (reeds), Fats Waller (organ) [2:59], 1928, on *Classic Jazz Piano*, copyright 1988 BMG Music, New York, New York.

"St. Louis Blues," Bessie Smith, vocal, with Louis Armstrong (cornet), Fred Longshaw (organ) [3:11], copyright 1989 CBS Records Inc., New York, New York.

"Contrary Motion," Willie "The Lion" Smith on piano [2:35], 1966, on *Classic Jazz Piano*, copyright 1988 BMG Music, New York, New York.

"A Handful of Keys," Fats Waller on piano [1:42], 1935, on *The Definitive Fats Waller: His Rhythm, His Piano, Volume One*, Stash Records, Inc., New York, New York.

"Mood Indigo," Duke Ellington on piano, with Bubber Miley, Arthur Whetsel, Freddy Jenkins (trumpets), Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton (trombone), Barney Bigard (clarinet), Johnny Hodges (alto sax), Harry Carney (baritone sax), Fred Guy (banjo); Wellman Braud (bass), Sonny Greer (drums) [2:52], 1929, on *Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, The Jungle Band, The Brunswick Years, Volume Two, 1929-1931*, copyright 1990 MCA Records, Inc., Universal City, California.

"Strange Fruit," Billie Holiday, vocal [2:21], from the video *Lady Day: The Many Faces of Billie Holiday*, copyright East Stinson Inc., Toby Byron/Multiprises.